

SOUTHERN BAPTIST SCIENTISTS SAY  
**DISCOVERY REINFORCES  
CREATOR GOD**

The high court's decision will determine the next steps of church/state justice, said Russell D. M. of the Southern Ethics & Religion Commission in Nashville.

Joshua Hawley, a Hobby Lobby

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## Westboro Church founder dies in Kansas

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Meridian native Fred Phelps, 84, the controversial pastor of the independent Westboro Church in Topeka, Kn., known for its protests of homosexuals and presidents as well as military funerals and the Southern Baptist Convention, died March 10.

Phelps' death was confirmed by his church, which he founded in 1955 and which now consists mostly of immediate and extended family members, according to media reports. The church said in a statement on its blog that Phelps had been in declining health for some time and had now "gone the way of all flesh."

Westboro Church is not associated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Phelps adopted his now-infamous protest strategy in 1991 after officials in Topeka failed to curtail the activity of homosexuals committing "indecent acts" in a public park near his home, as recounted in a New York Times report. Since then, Phelps and his followers have made headlines by declaring God's judgment on America most clearly expressed, they said, in the open practice and public ac-

ceptance of homosexuality, the plague of AIDS, and the death of American soldiers in war.

According to the church, it has held more than 52,000 pickets in 922 American cities. The church says it is preaching the Gospel message through demonstrations with signs that read, "God hates America," "Thank God for dead soldiers," and "God hates fags."

In a 1998 interview with the Houston Chronicle, Phelps described his message: "You can't believe the Bible without believ-

ing that God hates people. It's pure nonsense to say that God loves the sinner but hates the sin. He hates the sin, and he hates the sinner. He sends them to hell. Do you think he loves the people in hell?"

In 2010 after Phelps' group conducted protests at the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, Roger S. Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations with the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, disavowed any connection between the SBC and Phelps' practices, and any comparison between his hatred of people and the true Gospel of Christ.

# Top court to rule on religious freedom

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — The fate of religious freedom for Americans, especially business owners, could hang in the balance after U.S. Supreme Court justices heard oral arguments March 25 in challenges by two family-owned corporations to the Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate, which requires employers to provide abortion-causing drugs for their workers.

Hobby Lobby, a nationwide retail chain based in Oklahoma City, and Conestoga Wood Specialties, a Pennsylvania business, contend the federal regulation violates the two company owners' consciences and a 1993 law protecting religious liberty.

Religious freedom advocates predict the Supreme Court's decision will be far-reaching. The high court's opinion "will determine the next 100 years of church/state jurisprudence," said Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

Joshua Hawley, a lawyer assisting Hobby Lobby, described

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## Inside 1

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

# The Big Bust

Remember the promises? Uncountable riches beyond anyone's imagination, falling like manna from heaven. Hayseeds from other states coming to Mississippi to part with all their money. Grand highway systems and other astounding infrastructure projects. Public school funding in perpetuity. Jobs, jobs, and more jobs as far as the eye could see. Taxpayers would be off the hook. No longer would our state be last in anything.

Thus was legalized gambling sold to the people of Mississippi who, truth be told, swallowed the bait hook, line, and sinker. "Gaming" initially was to be isolated to a few riverboats along the Mississippi River. Regulation and oversight would be pervasive and strict. Nothing could go wrong, right?

Not so fast. Geoff Pender of The Clarion Ledger newspaper in Jackson wrote an eye-opening March 22 column that must surely be like the bracing sting of strong, bitter coffee in the mouths of gambling proponents (or maybe not, since so many of them have an almost sociopathic disregard for the general good of the state).

"Gambling revenue in the Tunica area is down more than 25% from 2008," Pender wrote. "Visitor count, or 'foot traffic,' for that area is down nearly 61%, industry officials told lawmakers. Those aren't just troubling numbers. They're dire, impending doom-type numbers for a big chunk of an industry that employs more than 23,000 Mississippians and provides roughly five percent of the state government budget. They're the type of numbers that start causing casinos to shut down."

"The industry is doing terribly statewide, with total revenue plunging 17% for the period and visitor count down 32%. The Coast market does appear to be picking up and is seeing substantial new investment and renovations. But the legalized Internet gambling movement and talk of the Florida Panhandle getting into the business could slam the industry on the Coast."

As Pender correctly asserted, those numbers are catastrophic. Worse than catastrophic, actually, and with unrelenting competition from other states drawing away customers, there will be little chance to ever make it up.

Legalized gambling in the state

is in a steep and steady decline, and is unlikely to ever recover. It has turned into an economic bust for the people of the state.

"The Mississippi casino market, once the third-largest behind Vegas and Atlantic City in its heyday, is now eighth," Pender wrote.

When it comes to gambling, it would appear many of our state's politicians, business leaders, and news media elites, ever bending to the will of the monied and the powerful for their own enrichment, sold us out yet again.

Yet again? In the 1960s as Mississippi struggled against the onslaught of a well-heeled alcohol lobby and its state-based toadies (see paragraph immediately above), we were promised almost verbatim the same endowments: better transportation, improved education, a phenomenal increase in our standard of living, relief for the endangered taxpayer.

In both cases, it didn't exactly turn out that way. Fifty years of legal alcohol has literally impoverished the people of this state — physically, financially, morally, and spiritually. There isn't a family in Mississippi that hasn't been touched in a negative way by rampant alcohol abuse.

Gambling likewise has taken the people of Mississippi farther than they wanted to go, kept them there longer than they expected, and cost them much more than they anticipated. Gamblers Anonymous chapters have boomed. Children have seen their college education savings stolen by parents and frittered away on casino tables. Thriving businesses have been lost to foreclosure and embezzlement. Families have been set adrift. Marriages have dissolved.

All for what amounts to a few pennies of profit — blood money, in many cases — for state and local governments. Lest we forget; in this country and state we are the government. Have drinking and gambling been worth the destruction of all the souls that can be laid at our feet? Has our costly complexity advanced the cause of Christ even a little bit?

When will we learn that we cannot rely on sin to solve our problems? It looks like we're going to need a Higher Power to explain that to us as only He can, probably one day soon. Very soon.

## Welcome, Welcome, Welcome

Governor Brumble opens the press conference at the governor's mansion in Pleasantville, the capitol of the state of Sunnyvale.

"I want to welcome everyone here tonight," she begins, "because our state is always welcoming. Welcome citizens and non-citizens. Welcome new business and old business. If someone says, 'Thank you,' in Sunnyvale, we always say, 'You're welcome.' That's just who we are. There is no higher priority in our state than making people feel welcome."

A reporter interrupts. "Is that a higher priority than the First Amendment?"

"You're welcome to ask that," Gov. Brumble replies. "Of course, the First Amendment is important, too. We always protect religious freedom and all that stuff, but today the issue is welcoming businesses to Sunnyvale and so we want to give a 'shout out' and a special welcome to the WWF and the Super Brawl."

The reporter interrupts again. "Did they really threaten to refuse to do business here if you signed the 'Right to Refuse to Do Business for Religious Reasons' bill into law?"

"Well, now, the WWF has every right to refuse to do business with folks they disagree with. They are welcome to do that," Governor Brumble notes, "but we want to assure them that they don't need to, because we are changing our convictions to match their convictions to make them feel welcome here in Sunnyvale."

"We are not going to sign that silly law that allows Sunnyvale citizens to refuse to do business with people they disagree with, based on some religious conscience — whatever that means."

"Shouldn't your citizens have the same rights of conscience that WWF has?" the reporter asks.

"No, no, that's the point I want to make today," the governor restates. "We want to assure the WWF that they are welcome. Everyone is welcome."

"Everyone?" the reporter continues. "Even people who supported the bill?"

"Well, almost everyone," Gov. Brumble says. "Unless you are one of, 'them.' With embarrassment, she points a nervous finger toward an anteroom that is cordoned off for the elected lawmakers who sponsored the bill."

Pleasantville Mayor Sludgepump steps beside the governor and says: "Let



## Guest opinion

with Mike Whitehead

me be plain. We don't welcome extremists here. You know, those whackos who actually think their religious beliefs have anything to do with their marketplace decisions. If they can't get with the program, we pleasantly say: 'Get outta town. There's no place for the likes of you in Sunnyvale.'"

"What about their rights of conscience?" the reporter pointedly asks the mayor. "If it's a good thing for the WWF to act on corporate conscience, why is it a bad thing to allow mom-and-pop stores to do the same?"

"No comparison," Sludgepump shoots back. "Totally different. We're talking the Super Brawl here. You're ridiculous."

"You're welcome," the reporter responds, "but the text of the bill I have in my hand says nothing about 'right to refuse service' or 'right to discriminate against gays.' It simply amends our state law to align it with the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. It protects the right to assert religious conscience as a defense in a lawsuit that invokes state law, and it applies to individual and corporate persons."

"What's wrong with allowing folks to assert this defense of conscience and letting a judge decide?"

"Conscience-shmonsience," Sludgepump thinks to himself. "Next thing, this bleeding-heart reporter will be worried about forcing a kosher deli to serve at a Nazi rally or an African American photographer to video a Ku Klux Klan rally."

"Well, I think you may be right that the bill merely follows the federal law," Governor Brumble injects, "and, as you say, the words, 'refuse to serve,' are not in the bill but I hear there are dangerous, broad, general terms in the bill that might be stretched by the courts to cause unintended consequences. My advisers

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# Ministry to trafficking victims slow, deliberate process

**RICHMOND, Va. (BP)** — At midnight on a cold Friday in January, Loree Becton stands on a street corner along Jefferson Davis Highway in Richmond, Va., an area notoriously known for prostitution and crime.

She's come a long way. Until a few months ago, Becton, wife of Mark Becton, pastor of Grove Avenue Church in Richmond, had to whisper the word, "prostitute," and would turn red-faced when she did. Now, she is here among them, praying for an opportunity to tell the women of the streets how much they are loved.

For Becton, a ministry to human trafficking victims in Richmond began in June 2011 with a simple prayer of surrender. "Lord, I give up!" Becton prayed. "I surrender to whatever it is you want me to do."

First, she had a lot of learning to do.

## Facing the problem

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of people, especially women and children, for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. The U.S. State Department estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders each year.

Domestically, human trafficking is difficult to quantify, explains Krystal Gandola, a spokesperson for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). "No one knows with certainty the exact number of children victimized through sex trafficking in the United States. We believe that child sex trafficking is a missing child issue."

Of the 60,000 missing child cases reported to NCMEC between 2008 and 2012, more than 48,000 (81%) are endangered runaways. These children, many of whom were in the child welfare system when they ran away, left home voluntarily but are unable to care for themselves. They are particularly vulnerable to the "manipulation and false promises" of traffickers, Gandola explains.

If this information wasn't alarming enough for Becton, the local snapshot was even more distressing. Until as recently as September 2013 the Polaris Project, a nonprofit organization addressing human trafficking on a global scale, identified Virginia as one of the "Dirty Dozen" U.S. states that did not effectively address human trafficking within its borders.

According to the Polaris definition, the state failed to provide adequate legislation against human trafficking, training on human trafficking for law enforcement officers, or safe harbor for victims.

"Could this really be happening in my own back yard?" Becton wondered. "Yes," says Sara Pomeroy, director of the Richmond Justice Initiative, a nonprofit, faith-based organization involved in local anti-trafficking efforts. "The intersections of Interstate 64, 95 and 295, and the city's proximity to Washington, D.C., make Richmond attractive to traffickers."

**New ministry born**

Armed with this information, the question for Becton then became, "What do we do now?" Initially, she waited.

"For several months after that initial prayer of surrender, a number of women began approaching me, asking, 'How is your church involved with human trafficking?'" Becton recalls. "I told them, 'We're not!'"

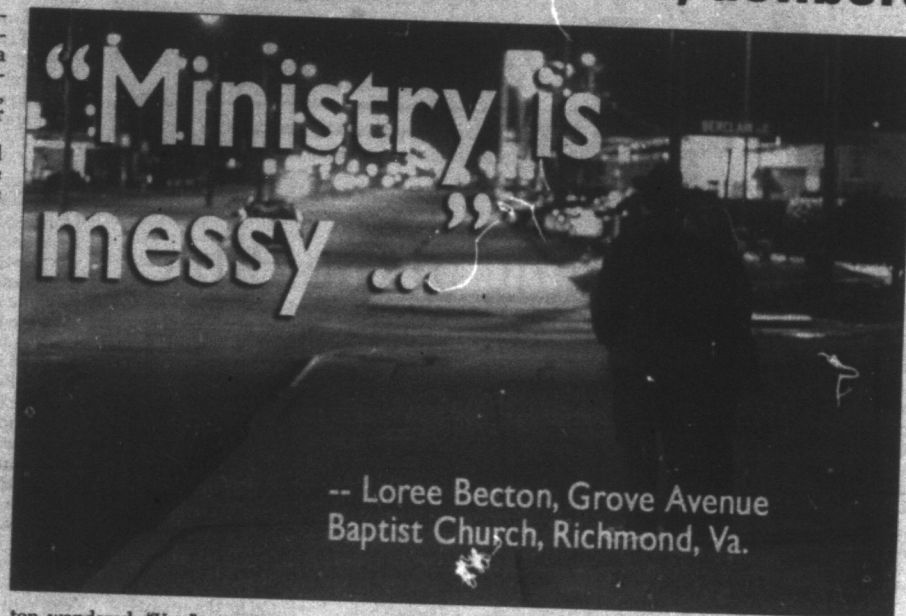
Then Becton began to explore a ministry to exploited women in Thailand. As she learned more about this type of outreach, she began pursuing ways she could become more involved in reaching exploited women in Richmond and around the world.

## New ministry born

Becton's first step involved gathering a group of women together for prayer. The small group began meeting regularly, praying that God would show them the specific steps He wanted them to take. Soon, the Precious to God ministry based on Psalm 72:14 was born.

"Psalm 72:14 in the Holman Bible says, 'He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious in His sight,'" Becton says. "That verse is a powerful promise of what God wants to do among trafficked women."

Becton and her team also began talking with law enforcement and researching the work of others involved in the fight against exploitation in the city. She soon



-- Loree Becton, Grove Avenue Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.

"Psalm 72:14 in the Holman Bible says, 'He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious in His sight.' That verse is a powerful promise of what God wants to do among trafficked women."

**Loree Becton**

**Grove Avenue Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.**

learned that a number of churches and organizations are involved in pieces of the fight against human trafficking — prevention, intervention and aftercare — but no single organization is tying it all together.

"We don't want to duplicate what others are doing," Becton says. "I see Grove Avenue as somehow playing a role in linking these organizations together."

## Risky business

Becton got a glimpse of what this kind of cooperation could look like during the June 1, 2013, "Sexpo," a small tradeshow of local porn stars and erotica exhibitors at a local hotel. When some local churches and anti-trafficking organizations learned of the event, they began to pray together about how best to influence those attending the convention.

Anastasis International Ministry, a local group that focuses on helping women who are hurting, purchased a booth at the tradeshow and offered free foot massages and gift bags provided by New Life Women's Center, a ministry of Cornerstone Assembly of God.

Others, including the team

from Grove Avenue Church, bought tickets and prayer walked inside the exhibit hall. To avoid drawing controversy and to facilitate quiet Gospel-focused conversations, none of them openly identified themselves as Christians or as affiliated with a particular church.

As the team from Anastasis was setting up their booth, they heard several exhibitors say, "I wonder where all the Christians are. I thought... they'd be here protesting."

The women of Anastasis said nothing. They finished their setup and offered foot massages throughout the afternoon. Toward the end of the day, they heard some of the exhibitors say again, "Where are the Christians? Where is the church? I thought sure the churches would be here lined up outside with their signs."

The women of Anastasis smiled and decided to enter the conversation. "We're the church," group members said. "And we've been here the entire time."

## Light of Christ

It is these kinds of face-to-face conversations that Becton desires to have with hurting women. That's how she met Valerie Carter, associate pastor for global (global/local) ministries at Bon Air Church in the Richmond area.

For several years, Carter and a small group from area churches have been prayer walking the red-light districts of Richmond one Friday night a month. Over the years, Carter and her team have had countless conversations and prayer with women and transvestites who work in the red-light district along Jefferson Davis Highway.

Currently, Carter and another

team member are regularly following up with two young women they met a few months ago.

Although the number of changed lives is difficult to quantify, Carter trusts that God is working in the lives of those she's had the opportunity to meet. "We never know how many women or men have sought help because of the move of God on their lives and our presence with the light of Christ in a dark place."

Although Becton has prayer walked with Valerie's team on several occasions, she has yet to develop relationships with women on the street. In fact, she has yet to see the same person twice. "The face to face has not gone as well as I would have liked," she acknowledges, "but we continue to pray for opportunities to share Jesus one-on-one."

## 'Prayer driving'

In an effort to facilitate more conversations in the red-light district, Becton's team has begun "prayer driving" Jefferson Davis Highway and other areas during the day.

"We realize that we must pray over the area during the daylight hours if we ever hope to reach women at night," Becton says. "By doing this, we are trusting God's Spirit to go before us and lead us to those He wants us to meet."

The team is also exploring several other options to facilitate face-to-face discussions, including beginning Bible studies with women in the red-light districts, contacting women who advertise escort services through various websites, offering to pray with women arrested for prostitution, and meeting women jailed for prostitution as they are released.

Becton said she knows that all of these options are fraught with danger and difficulty. "We've found that there is no real safe place for women to go when they are released from jail. There are a couple of organizations in the city that offer some level of aftercare to exploited women, but they are not equipped for long-term residential care."

In the face of such challenges, Becton and her team continue to press forward one step at a time.

"Ministry is messy," she explains. "I want a concrete plan, but that is not how the Lord has been leading us."

So, for now, Becton and her team continue to pray. They pray for increased awareness of human trafficking among believers. They pray for strong relationships among churches and like-minded organizations that are involved in the fight against trafficking.

Most of all, they pray that God will lead them to come alongside hurting women to show them His love. "We can only take it a step at a time," Loree says.

As I was reading the local newspaper today, the two lead articles began to catch my attention. They were not related to each other, but they seemed to have relevance at least in my mind. The feature article on the front page at the top was the announcement that they had found some gravitational waves that give further evidence that The Big Bang Theory may be true. Now this is the long held theory by many scientists that somewhere in almost eons ago for whatever reason there was an incredible, somewhat cataclysmic explosion that took place out of which matter was formed and galaxies began to expand across the heavens.

Today the paper reported that it took place 13.8 billion years ago. One small chunk of rock flew out into space and later it would inhabit life both in plant form and in animal form. It was a little rock called earth. On this small rock, there now lives about seven billion people, and you will find them in almost every place on earth. According to The Big Bang Theory, all of these folks along with all of the other living matter are the result of millions and millions of years of an evolutionary process. And so, here we are.

The other interesting article that was in the paper was one related to the search for the huge jumbo plane that took off from Malaysia, was headed toward China and disappeared from everywhere. Almost endlessly for two weeks, the news has been grinding out one



## Bang, Bang in the Bible

after another brilliant theory, one surely correct hypothesis of what happened to the airplane and why. As of this writing, nothing has been found. Now the people coming up with these ideas are brilliant. I would not in any way diminish that. There are people who have helped put thousands of satellites up in the sky so that we would all be connected both to give and to receive information. There are folks who come up with incredible equipment that will provide radar and sonar so that whether up in the sky or down in the sea, we can find it.

In one program where they were discussing where the plane probably went, one person had a strong, irrefutable theory that the plane went north. The other person presented a strong theory

that it went south. More than likely one of them will be correct. But for days and weeks brilliant scientists with all of the modern technology at their fingertips have been unable to come up with any shred of evidence of where the plane is, and how it got there. Now this is science working hard and giving its best simply to understand how a big jumbo yet either got off course, or intentionally went to another place, or fell into the ocean and no one can find it.

Let's go back to the two stories in the paper. In the first story of The Big Bang Theory being heralded as the means of creation, immediately God, the Bible and as the article said, "Long held religious beliefs may be in question." Maybe and maybe not! The biblical revela-

tion describing creation begins with "In the beginning God." I am fully aware of that, that it says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But before you look at the entire statement of Genesis 1:1, just understand that the mighty hand of a creative God is at work and whatever else you may want to think, say or believe, before anything ever happened at all God was.

I believe in the biblical presentation of creation because I know the God who can do in six days what some scientists say took 14 billion years. I confess that I have some difficulty with laying my Bible aside and believing in a scientific world with all of the discoveries, brilliance and tools which cannot find an airplane on this little planet. And yet they are telling me that they can see back 14 billion years to some waves and call it evidence that a big bang took place. For me, to believe that would take a whole lot more faith than trusting the God who I know.

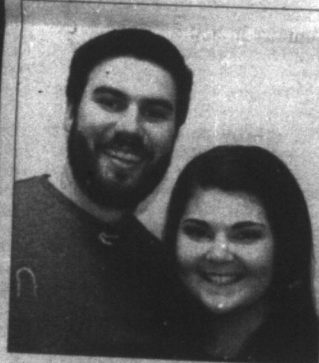
You can mark this down. In the beginning God is absolutely true. He is before the earth was formed. He is before the galaxies expanded. He is before Adam and Eve. He is God before history began. He is the God of all of the ages and He is the God of you and me. Mark this down, "In the beginning God." You can add to that without equivocation that in the end there is God.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

## Staff Changes



**NORTH COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, has called Joe Wiggins as pastor. He is a Columbia native. He is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Mid-America Seminary, and received his doctorate in expository preaching from New Orleans Seminary. He is shown with his wife, Angela, and daughter Jessica.



**NEW HEIGHTS CHURCH, SUMMIT**, called Trey Hess as high school and college pastor Mar. 12. He is shown with his wife Shelby.

## College News



**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** head coach Steve Knight was named NABC/NAIA Coach of the Year at the National Tournament Tip-Off Banquet on Tuesday night at the Kansas City Convention Center. Knight, who was also named SSAC Coach of the Year, has guided the Crusaders to a school-record 27 wins this season. The Crusaders stormed through the Southern States Athletic Conference with a perfect 18-0 regular season record to secure the SSAC West Division Title and then added three more wins to secure the SSAC Championship. Coach Knight is a member of the Southern Miss Hall of Fame and a nominee for the Mississippi Sports HOF.

## BIBL i O C I P H E R

GBUJB KQ MKP JKCRUCJVHB AV KQ

LUC? YCX UQ U LYM HBV HNPBH, GBM

XK MV CKH OVDUVRV AV?

ZKBC VUWBH: QKNHM-LUS

Clue: J = C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Colossians 4:6

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# LoveLoud having positive impact on churches, lost

**ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)** — The search for the neglected is not a difficult one. Most people don't have to look any further than their local public school.

That's what Macedonia Church did in Jackson, Ga. The congregation decided to do something to help the hundreds of students in their community who may not get regular meals during the summer. For 10 weeks last summer their church joined two other congregations in providing lunches for more than 200 local children whose families said they needed help.

"I hope [our community] sees the love of Christ coming through us," Lane Sanders, pastor of Macedonia Church, said. "We don't look at ourselves as separated unto ourselves, but we have a mission and an investment in the community."

Jerry Daniel, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) LoveLoud team leader, said Macedonia Church is one of a growing movement of Southern Baptist churches that are demonstrating God's love by meeting significant human need while sharing Christ.

"There's a movement happening among Southern Baptists," Daniel said. "God has created a groundswell of churches that are loving their communities like Jesus would. We want

## On the web

For more information, visit LoveLoud at [www.namb.net/loveloud](http://www.namb.net/loveloud). To hear an interview with Ryan West, visit [namb.net/RyanWestInterview](http://namb.net/RyanWestInterview).

to highlight this and encourage other churches to get involved."

Macedonia Church delivered lunches in neighborhoods they had never visited and met people struggling with great need, Sanders said. Several of the children they fed last summer attended the church's Vacation Bible School. At least one of them committed her life to Christ.

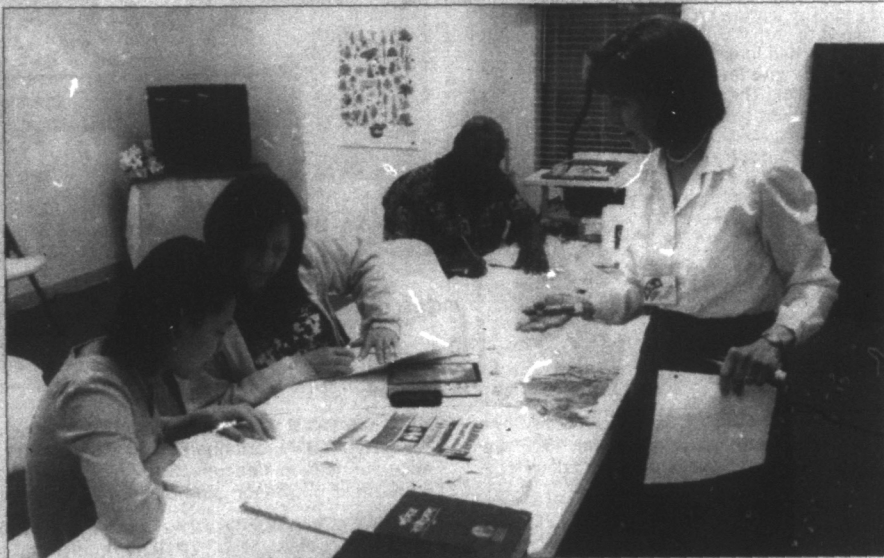
Discovering a similar need among students in Philadelphia, Chuck Kieffer thought of a solution. Kieffer, a church planter and pastor of Philadelphia's The Foundry Church, led his congregation to reach their urban neighbors by growing fresh produce.

Their urban garden naturally provided teachable moments along with a 500-pound annual yield of fresh produce. Garden Camp, an urban gardening-based Vacation Bible School (VBS), was the next step.

"We teach gardening techniques and nutrition, which are easy to bridge to biblical concepts of our Creator," Kieffer said of the weeklong VBS. "Doesn't every church have some piece of ground they are not using? Every church can do this."

"We live in an area in Philadelphia that is a true paradox. We are just a few blocks from some of the wealthiest residents of the city, but within our immediate area one out of three children go to bed hungry each night. We have to do something to help feed them and reach them for Christ."

As part of its efforts to help



**HELPING HAND** — Paulette DeHart (right), Georgia Baptist Convention missionary for Literacy Missions, works with students as she leads an English as a Second Language class with Solodad Andrade (second from left) of Colombia, Ricardo Oriole (second from right) of Haiti, and Ming Yang of China. Literacy mission work is one of many ways churches engage their local communities through LoveLoud. (BP photo)

foster a LoveLoud movement through churches, NAMB is shining a spotlight on activities like those championed by Macedonia Church and The Foundry in hopes that such examples can serve as a model for other churches.

"We are collecting data and identifying churches and ministries involved in mercy ministries," said Ryan West, NAMB national director for LoveLoud. "We are furthering the conversation of what churches are already doing. We are attempting to help foster and build networks."

One of NAMB's goals is to help those involved in mercy ministries feel more connected

to others doing similar work, West said. "There are some common issues among caregivers. Many struggle with the feeling of isolation. They think they are attempting to assist the neglected in their community by themselves."

"One thing we can do is help them find partners and others who are helping the neglected in their communities in other ways. This helps alleviate that sense of becoming overwhelmed by pressing needs."

An aspect of the LoveLoud movement that makes it attractive to cities is how those deeply involved in mercy ministry are instruments of peace in their

cities — personal peace through the presence of Christ and peace within the community.

"Many cities have a dry environment without connection to a vibrant faith community," West said. "LoveLoud brings a refreshing peace. The Gospel brings the fountain of life to the desert."

It is this result that often opens the doors to Gospel conversations and faith encounters, West said. Mercy ministries with ties to local churches are important when people come to faith in Christ. Established relationships help new Christians feel welcome when they come to worship and join churches.

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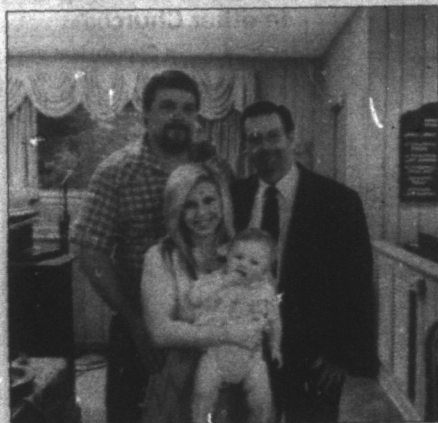


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## Just for the Record



**TILLATOBA CHURCH, TILLATOBA**, held a baby dedication ceremony Mar. 16. Shown are Jake, Nancy, and baby John Luke Rose, with pastor Rickey Harris.



**NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, TISHOMINGO ASSOCIATION**, ordained Kevin Blakney and Mike Johnson as deacons. Shown are pastor Ed Kennedy, Johnson, and Blakney.



**GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG**, held a groundbreaking ceremony for their new fellowship hall building. Shown are Dennis Wilson, Doug McKay, pastor Victor Walsh, Walter Carpenter, Lamar Williams, Tommy Smith, and Daniel Williams.



The youth of **NESHOBA CHURCH, UNION**, ministered to the church's shut-ins, visiting 15 older members. The youth also sent stuffed toys to children at the Pioneer Hospital in Newton, and birthday cards to missionary kids. Shown, front row, are Patricia Collins, Jordan McKinnion, Scott Westberry Jr., Lane Atkins, and Tina Westberry; back row, Rebecca Keen, Ruth McKinnion, Isabella Westberry, Anna Wooten, Scott Westberry Sr., and Zack Hollingsworth.



**ZION HILL CHURCH, WESSON**, recently ordained Billy R. Crow as deacon. Shown are Gerald Aultman, Barbara Crow, Joseph Oster, and Crow.



**FIRST CHURCH GLENDALE, HATTIESBURG**, held a deacon ordination Dec. 8, 2013. Shown are pastor Jimmy Hill, Marty Ward and his wife Jill, and deacon chairman Tommy MacDermott.



**BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR**, held its children's church Bible drill Mar. 16. Back row - Mary Ann Kelly, Grant Estes, Nathan Kelly, and Barbara J. Harrison; front row - Jacob Howell, Annley Howell (Bible Buddy), and Heston Harrison.



**TOOMSUBA CHURCH, TOOMSOBA**, held a baby dedication for James Thomas Feeley IV. Shown, back row, are pastor J. David Caves, Charity Feeley holding James Thomas, and Jimmy Feeley; front row, Madison Feeley and Anastasia Feeley.



**LADIES FROM CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, are shown sewing on badges for RAs and GAs.



**TERRY'S CREEK CHURCH, MAGNOLIA**, held a deacon recognition service Mar. 9 for (from left) Clarence Easley (37 years service), John Bond (50+ years), and Armond Lea (50+ years). Also shown is pastor LaVerne Summerlin.



## Just for the Record



**BAY SPRINGS CHURCH, BAY SPRINGS**, held an organizational meeting for their Baptist Men's group, B-Men, Mar. 2. Thirty-one men attended the organizational meeting. Jim Didlake, guest speaker; Lee Yancey, pastor.



The children and preschool of **TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, used the theme of GenerationReach to decorate and prepare a meal for the church family. Robert Smith, director of the Christian Food Mission, recognized the children and the church for their support of the ministry. The RAs and GAs received new vests and badges. Leaders are Marshall Fitzgerald, Karen Fitzgerald, and Bobbie Bridges.

Men from the **MARION COUNTY BROTHERHOOD, TRI-COUNTY ASSOCIATION**, built a storage building for the Center for Pregnancy Choices of Lawrence County. Shown, front row, are Tony Morris, Glenn Raybourn, Mike Patrick, and Cory Pittman; back row, Gary Morris, Darel Daniels, Kevin Smith, and Doyle Robbins.



### In other Church News:

➤ **High Hill Church, Neshoba County**, will have a 5th Sunday Night Singing Mar. 30, 6 p.m., featuring One Way Quartet. Don Cook, pastor; Mike Barker, music leader.

➤ **Country Woods Church, Byram**, is having its 4th annual Underground Church Apr. 4, 6:30 p.m. - midnight. Robert J. Morgan, Bible study leader; Chris Layton, worship leader; Jon Daniels, pastor. For more information, call (601) 371-7955.

**NEW MONTEPELIER CHURCH, CEDARBLUFF**, sponsored a five-session study on True Love Waits for its youth. Fourteen students participated Feb. 19 in the study led by Mississippi State University students Anna Claire Robinson and Cole Bostick. The students were part of a commitment service the following Sunday.



### MISSISSIPPI WMU SEEKING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

#### DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

The Executive Director-Treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union is responsible for promoting, planning, conducting and evaluating the missions mobilization, missions awareness, missions education, missions support and missions involvement among women, youth, girls, preschoolers and co-ed groups in Mississippi Baptist churches and associations throughout the state.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Education: College: 4 years; Seminary: 2 to 3 years  
Experience: Church/Denomination: 5 to 10 years

#### RESUMES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:

WMU Search Committee, Marion D. Duncan, Chairman,  
277 Cambridge Drive, Starkville, MS 39759

RESUMES WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL APRIL 30, 2014

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

*"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)*  
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

# The great snake debate: To handle or not to handle

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)** — When the Rev. Jamie Coots, co-star of National Geographic Channel's reality TV show *Snake Salvation* was bitten on the hand by a rattlesnake, he refused medical treatment and died in less than two hours.

Coots, who was leading mid-February services at the Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus' Name in Middlesboro, Ky., and his followers represent a sect of Christianity that incorporates snake handling into worship, relying heavily on Mark 16:17-18 for support.

The beloved pastor, who survived numerous snakebites in the past, is not the first to die in this manner since George Went Hensley introduced snake handling to Appalachian churches in the early 1900s. Coots died the way he lived, faithful to his beliefs.

Some people classify snake handlers like Coots as cultists, but there is a distinction between cults and sects. A cult is a religious organization whose members claim to be Christians, and who use the Bible and Christian terms, yet who deny the central beliefs of historic, biblical Christianity.

More to the point, a cult is based on a counterfeit Christian message. For example, Jehovah's Witness and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints belong to movements that deny biblical doctrines inherent to orthodox Christianity.

Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity, the deity of Christ, His atonement on the cross, His physical resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith — all non-negotiable Christian doctrines.

In a similar fashion, Mormons hold unbiblical views of God. They



**COOTS**

teach that Jesus and Lucifer were brothers born into the spirit world through sexual relations between Elohim and a goddess wife, and that "as man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."

Snake-handling Pentecostals, however, embrace the core doctrines of the Christian faith. Therefore, they are not members of a cult but of a sect, which may be defined as a group that embraces orthodox doctrine but has established its own identity and teachings distinct from the broader Christian community.

Coots truly believed that Mark 16:17-18 is a command: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will pick up snakes; if they should drink anything deadly, it will never harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well."

As Andrew Hamblin, 21, pastor of Tabernacle Church of God in LaFollette, Tenn., told *The Tennessee* daily newspaper, "To me it's a mandate. You don't have to do it to go to heaven, but you do have to believe it is the word of God to take up serpents."

Hamblin begins each service with a warning: "There's death in that box," he says, pointing to snakes in stacked wooden and glass containers.

There are sound reasons to reject the interpretation of Mark 16 that Hamblin and others embrace. First, manuscript evidence indicates broad uncertainty about whether verses 9-20 were part of the original autograph of Mark's Gospel. As the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible explains, "Either Mark ended his Gospel here [verse 8], he never wrote an intended ending, or his original ending has been lost."

A second reason to reject snake handling as normative for the church is that there are no commands for it elsewhere in Scripture, either in the Gospels or the Epistles. Nor do we see it practiced in the early church.

Thirdly, a distinction must be made between what the writers of Scripture record and what they command. If this passage truly is canonical, it likely describes God's miraculous preservation of His people under extraordinary circumstances.

The apostle Paul was bitten by a viper, yet survived (Acts 28:3-6).

Finally, God does not instruct anyone to entertain death in a box. God's sovereign will should not be tested. The "spiritual high" described in these worship services may be more of an adrenaline rush than "the closest thing to heaven," as Hamblin describes it.

God may allow people to live to a ripe old age or take us home prematurely in divine discipline (see 1 Corinthians 11:27-32), but His sovereignty should not be tested with snake salvation.

redeeming  
**GRACE**  
women's conference  
2 corinthians 12:9

- friday & saturday, april 11-12, 2014
- first baptist church yazoo city  
yazoo city, ms
- speaker is kasey van norman:

"I teach through the lens of my own life-story, but ultimately, through the truth of God's Word. When we hold the Bible up to our own life and filter it through, we will experience the absolute truth of who God is and who we are meant to be."

Michael O'Brien is probably most known from his 7 year tenure as lead singer of the Christian band Newsong. Sensing that God was calling him to step out of his secure position with Newsong in 2006, Michael had to start all over. When asked if he has any regrets about leaving, he replies "I knew it was something that God was calling me to. I was somewhat apprehensive and yet excited to take a step of faith and completely put my trust in the Lord. God has not disappointed."

- worship leader michael o'brien

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## WHITEHEAD

cont. from p.2

say the bill is just too broad and general to be safe."

The reporter reminds the politicians of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The first 16 words in the Bill of Rights, the reporter notes, are "broad, general words designed to broadly protect rights of conscience."

"Whatever," Governor Brumby mumbles, as she returns to her scripted message of the day.

Whitehead, an attorney in Kansas City, Mo., has previously served as general counsel to the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and business vice-president for Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MT. OLIVE, AL, IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR.** Master of Divinity preferred; 5-10 years' experience as Pastor at a Southern Baptist Church. Please submit resumes by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 3200 Mt. Olive Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117. OR e-mail resumes to: [Shella@fbcmo.org](mailto:Shella@fbcmo.org)

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## MS POSITIONS

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**BETHSAIDA BAPTIST CHURCH IN FRENCH CAMP IS SEEKING A PIANO PLAYER/CHOIR DIRECTOR. THIS IS A PART TIME POSITION.** Interested people should contact Tony Thomas at 662-547-6616 or Pastor Alex Lawson at 662-674-0366. Email inquiries can email [alawson233@wildblue.net](mailto:alawson233@wildblue.net)

**DESOTO BAPTIST CHURCH (CLARKE COUNTY) IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC.** Please send resume to: DeSoto Baptist Church, 62 Jasper St. Shubuta, MS 39360. For questions please call 601-776-6050.

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RUNNELSTOWN IN PETAL, MS IS PRAYERFULLY SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR.** Please send resumes to First Baptist Church of Runnelstown, C/O Pastor Search Committee, 9211 Highway 42, Petal, MS 39465.

**YOUTH MINISTER-WILDWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN CLINTON, MS.** Please mail resumes to Wildwood Baptist Church, 101 Auburn Dr., Clinton, MS 39056 or email to [wbbc@comcast.net](mailto:wbbc@comcast.net)

**MINISTER OF EDUCATION/MISSIONS** First Baptist Church Columbus seeks an energetic leader with a strong work ethic; good communications skills; passion for growing Sunday school/groups; and passion for leading missions outreach locally and internationally. Send resumes, not on file with Mississippi State Baptist Convention, promptly to: [acb48@cableone.net](mailto:acb48@cableone.net)

**BECKER BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A YEAR ROUND BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER.** Please send resumes to: Becker Baptist Church, Youth Search Committee, P. O. Box 83, Becker, MS 38825.

**DREW BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR OR A SEMI-RETIRED MINISTER.** Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 371 Shelby Dr., Drew, MS 38737.

**ARBOR GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH, HOUSTON, MS.** Small, rural church seeking part-time Music Minister. Great starter church. Email resume to: [rorryvan69@gmail.com](mailto:rorryvan69@gmail.com) or call 662-456-2091.

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN KOSCIUSKO, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME FAMILY/CHILDREN'S MINISTER.** Please send resume to First Baptist Church, Attn.: Personnel Committee, P O Box 70, Kosciusko, MS 39090.



## DISCOVERY

cont. from p. 1

Bill Nettles, professor and chair of the Department of Physics and associate dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Baptist-affiliated Union University in Jackson, Tenn., said that regardless of a believer's position on the age of the universe, the recent discovery of gravitational waves is evidence that humans were created in God's image.

Nettles, a Brandon native who grew up in First Church, Brandon, holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton, and a Master of Science degree and Ph.D. in nuclear physics from Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He taught physics at MC for 23 years.

"That we can develop models (from creative minds) and use incredible discipline to imagine what previous conditions must have existed to produce the phenomena which we now see, and to extract and extrapolate the mathematics which predict yet-unseen physical phenomena that 'fingerprint' the beginning moments of creation, is something no sub-human species has even approached. We

occupy a unique position in creation," Nettles said in an email interview with BP.

Revelations about the universe's complexity should reassure believers of God's providential care, Nettles said.

Psalms 19 and 136 use "the majesty of the physical creation" to "introduce the covenant-keeping Yahweh," he said. "It says that a God powerful enough to design, create, and maintain this huge universe is powerful enough to preserve His covenant people."

Faculty members of the six Southern Baptist seminaries hold to both old and young earth creationism. There is widespread agreement, however, that Darwinian evolution is unscriptural.

"The recent purported detection of gravitational waves serves as further confirmation of Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and of the nature of the Big Bang itself," Bruce Gordon, associate professor of the history and philosophy of science at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas, told Baptist Press (BP) in an e-mail interview.

"If corroborated by the sci-

tific community, this is a hugely important discovery, and there will probably be some... Nobel Prizes associated with it," said Gordon, who also is a senior fellow with the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based think tank that plays a leading role in the Intelligent Design Movement.

The Design Movement argues

that the universe is the product of intelligence rather than blind chance.

Scientists have argued for decades that the Big Bang produced gravitational waves which polarized electro-

magnetic radiation throughout the universe in a specific way. A telescope at the South Pole known as BICEP2 detected that type of polarization for the first time, researchers of the BICEP2 consortium announced March 17.

According to these scientists, the discovery also provides evidence for "inflationary cosmology" or "inflation," the idea that the universe expanded faster than the speed of light during the first trillionths of a second following the Big Bang. If the universe initially expanded merely at the speed of light —

the highest velocity at which any cause can have an effect in space-time — it could not have reached its present size, according to Big Bang proponents.

Alan Guth, currently a professor of physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., proposed inflation in 1980 in an attempt

to explain the universe's fine tuning and uniformity without reference to a supernatural creator. If all matter was crunched together before the Big Bang, Guth said, its initial proximity should result in some degree of uniformity as it expands, explaining the consistency of scientific laws without a creator.

However, Gordon said cosmic inflation requires so much fine-tuning itself that the theory unwittingly increases the likelihood of the universe's creation by an intelligent designer.

"The energy of the inflationary field has to be shut off with tremendous precision in order for a universe like ours to exist, with inflationary models requiring a shut-off energy precision of at least one part in one hundred thousand trillion trillion trillion or perhaps as much as one part

on one hundred billion trillion googol," he said. A googol is a unit of measurement that consists of a digit followed by 100 zeroes, or  $1.0 \times 10^{100}$ .

The notion of a "multiverse" is often coupled to the inflationary mechanism, Gordon said, "with the idea that, if inflation produces enough universes, such improbabilities don't matter. ...[T]he BICEP2 results don't speak to the issue of a multiverse which, even if it existed by such means, would be the result of a finely tuned universe generator."

"In short, it's intelligent design no matter which way you turn, and theophobic scientific materialists, once they get past knee-jerk denials, will have to come to terms with this fact."

The detection of gravitational waves also factors into the debate between young and old earth creationists, Gordon said.

If those who believe the universe is only thousands of years old argue that God created it with the appearance of age, the new discovery poses no problem for them, he said. God could have created earth with light from distant stars already present even though it hadn't had time to travel from those stars, for example.



NETTLES



GORDON

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

## COURT

cont. from p. 1

it as a landmark case. "It has major significance for religious liberty" and "for what constitutional rights business owners can claim," said Hawley, a member of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty legal team and an associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Law in Columbia.

Matt Bowman, senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom in Scottsdale, Az., explained to Baptist Press the consequences for not only the Green family (the evangelicals who own Hobby Lobby) and the Hahns (the pro-life Mennonite family that owns Conestoga Wood), but other people who seek to exercise their religious beliefs.

"If the Hahn and Green families lose, the door would be open to allow the government to force people of faith to pay massive fines threatening jobs and health coverage just simply because they are choosing not to violate their faith and conscience," Bowman told BP in an e-mail interview.

"If the Hahn and Green families win, it will protect religious liberty as promised in the Constitution and American law, and people of faith will not be subject to massive fines just because they don't want to help destroy human life."

The arguments at the Supreme Court arrive after more than two and a half years of protests by pro-life and reli-

"If the Hahn and Green families win, it will protect religious liberty as promised in the Constitution and American law, and people of faith will not be subject to massive fines just because they don't want to help destroy human life."

Matt Bowman

senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom

gious freedom advocates. In implementing the 2010 health-care reform law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced in August 2011 a proposed rule requiring employers to pay for coverage of contraceptives, including drugs that can induce abortions.

Objections to the regulation failed to produce either a retraction from HHS or adequate conscience protections requested by religious liberty proponents.

More than 300 parties — some nonprofit organizations and some for-profit corporations — have combined to file 94 lawsuits against HHS in the meantime, according to the Becket Fund. The consolidated case the justices heard March 25 involves for-profit businesses. The nonprofit cases have yet to work their way up to the high court.

While some conscientious objectors to the HHS rule oppose underwriting all contraceptives, Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood protest paying only for abortion-causing drugs. Federal appeals courts

reached different conclusions last year in the lawsuits. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia ruled for the federal government in Conestoga Wood's challenge, while the 10th Circuit Court in Denver sided with Hobby Lobby.

The principle involved in the case is rooted in theology and America's founding, Moore said. "The government doesn't grant us religious liberty; God does," he told Baptist Press in a written statement. "The government is to recognize that God-given natural right for all persons to freely exercise their religious convictions."

"What's at stake is the heritage our forefathers bought with their blood," Moore said. "More than that, what's at stake is the truth that God alone, and not Caesar, is Lord of the conscience."

There are 59 briefs supporting Hobby Lobby and/or Conestoga Wood, according to the Becket Fund, and 23 briefs filed in opposition.

The high court is expected to issue a decision before the end of its term in late June or early July.

# THE VILLAGE VIEW



**Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director**

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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

### DECEMBER 2013

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Mr. Arnold L. Chavers  
Wynndale BC Ladies Bible Study Group  
Mrs. Carol Schilling  
Ms. Sandra Yarbrough  
Mr. & Mrs. Ron A. Yarbrough  
Ms. Phyllis A. Yarbrough

### DECEMBER 2013

#### MEMORIALS

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Richard & Tony Rogers Families  
Archie Albritton  
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton  
Mr. & Mrs. Joe W. Albritton

Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton  
John D. Albritton  
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Billy & Tanya Moore  
Mr. George Allen  
Mr. & Mrs. Krandall Howell  
Mr. & Mrs. Troy N. Alford  
Mrs. Sue Hamilton  
Richard C. "Ricky" Allen  
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Allen  
Mrs. Sue Hamilton  
Mr. Oneil Alfred  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Michael Alvarez  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur D. Burnett  
Robert Vacques (Bob) Anderson  
Mr. & Mrs. William G. Sansing, Sr.  
Alan Andrews  
Mrs. Edna M. Gilliland  
Jimmy Arthur  
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur  
Lamar Arthur  
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur  
Arlin Averett  
Mr. & Mrs. Wade L. Allen  
Mrs. Betty Barber  
Rory and Janet Lee  
Ernest L. Barlow Sr.  
Mrs. Odelle T. Barlow  
Mrs. Mildred M. Barron  
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh  
Mr. & Mrs. James E. Clark  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy B. Carruth  
Mr. & Mrs. Krandall Howell  
Ms. Laila McEwen  
Mr. & Mrs. Ron D. Craddock  
Mr. Jack Beall  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. Kenneth Beard  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Mrs. Betty Lou Bell  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Emery Payton Bell  
Mr. & Mrs. Ellard Ray Adams  
Mrs. Ileta Bennett  
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Dixon  
Mrs. Lillie Mae Bexley  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Muscio  
Mr. Blake Bierbaum  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Marlin D. Blanton  
Ms. Ethelene J. Blanton  
Mrs. Minnie Blasingame  
Mr. & Mrs. Wallace G. Hillhouse  
Mr. & Mrs. Shirley D. Bohannon  
Mr. & Mrs. William L. Bohannon  
Mrs. Wilhelmina Bond  
Reece & Martha Douglas  
Mr. Leo Bonner  
Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Lanningham, Jr.  
Barbara M. Bounds  
Mr. & Mrs. C. Scott Bounds  
Hilda Bourne  
Mr. & Mrs. Ted Purcell  
Glendra Bourque  
Ms. Jeanne Y. Tapp  
Mr. Clifton Boyd  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Mildred Boyd  
Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Adams  
Catherine Bracken  
Mr. & Mrs. Danny L. Moore  
Ann Moore  
Bubba Johnson  
Georgia Brandon  
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Burgess  
Bo Dick Brewer  
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton  
Donald Brewer  
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Allen  
Preston Kelly Brooks Sr.  
Mr. Charles W. Holmes  
Mr. Daniel S. Wright  
FBC Oxford

Mr. Olen Broom  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. & Mrs. Lester Haddox  
Marlene B. Brown  
Ms. Ethelene J. Blanton  
Harry Brumfield  
Anthony DeLee Family  
Couples III SSC, Arlington BC  
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Johnston  
Robert & Gail King  
Mr. Howard Bruner  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. Jimmy Bruner  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. Bill G. Brunson  
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas M. Simmons  
Ms. Carolyn C. Pogue  
Ms. Theresa L. Phillips  
Polly Buchanan  
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Blair  
Nettie Bumgart  
Mary Malone  
Bradford Chapel BC  
John Bunch  
Jack & Judy McRee  
Mr. Joe Bustin  
Mrs. Joy B. Roberts  
Ms. B. Gail Rittenhouse  
Delton and Mildred Campbell  
Ray & Linda Campbell  
Mac Campbell  
Ray & Linda Kay Campbell  
Mr. Thurman "Sonny" Carmichael  
Rev. & Mrs. William B. Webb  
Colleen Carr  
Byron & Nell Dean  
Mr. Malcolm Carter  
Dr. Rebecca Sue Wilkie  
Betty Chapman  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Chapman  
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Childs  
Mr. & Mrs. Glyn Jones  
Rev. Wallace Clark  
Ms. Joyce R. Hall  
Jessica Clifford  
Branch BC

## SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

**APRIL 29, 2014**

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

MORRISON HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH  
CLINTON, MS

The Baptist Children's Village has partnered with the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Morrison Heights Baptist Church to provide SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING to help reduce the risk of child abuse in your communities.



Event is free but registration is required.  
For more information call (601) 952-2422  
or visit [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com).

## BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at [ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com](mailto:ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com) or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com).



# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR MARCH 30, 2014

## Don't Be a Slacker • Proverbs 13:4; 14:23; 20:4; 24:30-34; 26:13-14; 28:19; 6:6-8; 10:5; 14:4; 21:20; 24:27; 27:23-27; 11:24-25; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27

The awesome thing about studying the book of Proverbs is the true life, practical life applications that it makes. Today we are dealing with the subject of laziness or being a "slacker," as the lesson title says. When you think of laziness, it is usually associated with our work or work ethic. Our passages from Proverbs give us very practical advice on the type of work ethic we should have as God's children. Moreover, it warns us what will happen if we are lazy and do not put forth the effort to work and provide for our own needs. In our world today many people find their sense of identity in their job or chosen vocation. The American dream has always carried with it the idea that if you work hard you will succeed. Proverbs teaches us that God desires for us to have a strong work ethic that will enable us to meet not only our own needs but also the needs of others who have run into life's difficulties and desperately need help. The instructions in Proverbs will help us to be diligent workers and generous givers of what we have been blessed with by our Godly work habits.

### Work Diligently (13:4; 14:23; 20:4; 24:30-34; 26:13-14; 28:19)

Scripture has always taught us that diligence brings great blessings from

God. Whether it is in prayer, studying God's word, involving ourselves in worship, or working, diligence pays off in the end. The person who is a "slacker" finds himself with no produce because he did not sow any seed during the planting season. (20:4) We need to be careful not to assume that all people who are in need or do not have jobs are lazy. Also, many who do have jobs do not make enough to provide for their needs. The advice given in Proverbs is twofold. God is reminding believers to keep

working diligently, and He is challenging slackers to adopt a diligent work ethic. The danger is that those without good work habits will fall into poverty because of their laziness. Believers are challenged to take their work responsibilities seriously so that their needs will be met and so that they can help those who really need assistance.



### Explore the Bible with Huey Dedmon

### Work Smartly (6:6-8; 10:5; 14:4; 21:20; 24:27; 27:23-27)

These passages from Proverbs deal with a different approach to our work ethic than those under "Work Diligently." Working smartly deals with taking the right actions at the right time in our work. A farmer knows when to plant and when to harvest. The slacker may plant a field but chooses to sleep during the harvest and his crop ruins due to his laziness. He is left with nothing because of his choosing not to harvest. There

are many decisions we make every day through our jobs that must be done in a timely manner. Slackers are advised to learn from the ant (6:6-8), that works tirelessly to provide for its needs. Believers are also challenged by the work ethic of the ant to work smartly by taking the right work-related actions at the right time. Through working smartly, we show God's wisdom through our lives.

### Give Generously (11:24-25; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27)

Through these passages from Proverbs we see the underlying reason God desires for us to have good work habits. Throughout scripture we are taught that our purpose in life is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Many times in scripture Jesus taught us by His example that to meet the spiritual needs of people we must sometimes meet their physical needs first. Implementing the proper work habits in our lives will put us into the position to share with others, with the ultimate goal of sharing Christ's love with them. The slacker puts himself in the position of not being able to help others; therefore, he ruins his opportunity to share Christ. His laziness also is a bad example that may influence others to be like him. As believers, we should desire to be good examples in our work habits because they portray God's wisdom through us. Also, through the material blessings we receive due to our diligent work ethic, we can intentionally use those blessings to meet the needs of others and practice giving generously.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education and Outreach, Brandon Church, Brandon.

## Work Your Plan • 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

I kill plastic plants. My thumb and I share the same name...brown. Consequently, I am at a distinct disadvantage when I must employ agrarian concepts to convey spiritual truths. Thank goodness, Paul the Apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit plowed that row for me already.

From the Garden of Eden into the Garden of Gethsemane through the Garden Tomb and all the way to the Garden of the Tree of Life, God has always been and will always be the Master Gardener. On resurrection morning (John 20), Mary Magdalene was perfectly on target when she mistakenly assumed Jesus to be the caretaker of the garden. Jesus was the grain of wheat who willingly fell to the earth and died (John 12:24). He had now risen as the first fruits of those who sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). His desire for us is that we plant our lives deeply into the soil of His bountiful love and divine purpose. Through our willing obedience to die as a seed in the ground, God will bring forth all that will benefit us and be a blessing to others.

Sowing and reaping is a spiritual principle that runs through the bible from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. I, even I, the one with the brown thumb, fully understand that you cannot plant tomatoes and reap water-

melons. You get exactly what you plant. In John 15, the words of Jesus leave no doubt as to His desire for fruit, more fruit, much fruit. No plant, no fruit.

The continued plea of Paul to this church in Corinth was for them to follow through on their well-intentioned plan to gather a monetary gift to assist the struggling churches in Jerusalem. In this passage of scripture, he nails home his point by appealing to their logic. These offerings were being compared to placing a packet of seed into the ground so that a harvest might result. Their gifts would be sown into the furrows of these needy believers. The harvest would be the furtherance of the gospel both in Corinth and in Jerusalem.

There are lessons to learn from Paul's counsel to Corinthian givers. First, realize that giving is a matter of the heart. Next, make a plan to give. Finally, we must give with a happy heart. God just doesn't do

"grouchy." We should regularly remind ourselves that everything we have belongs to God. Could it be that meditating on the gravity of that thought might cause us to look more carefully at what we DARE to KEEP rather than concentrating on what we CARE to GIVE?

God made the seed. God supplies the seed to the sower. God watches the seed as it germinates. God is the Lord of the Harvest. When we obey His scriptural command to be cheerful (yes, hilarious!) givers,

we can anticipate the promised result according to the Word of God. Verse 8 says that when we give God's way, we will have what

we need, yes, even more than we need. Warning: Do not confuse this promise with the latest TV sweepstakes advertisement. Why not? Giving is not for what we gain. Verse 11 promises we will be enriched in everything so that we can be even more liberal (generous) in our giving the next time!

The needs of those we help will be fully supplied. Both the giver and the recipient will overflow in thanksgivings to God. Generous giving leads us naturally toward an attitude of worship which brings glory to God, exactly where He desires us to be.

Second Corinthians nine contains a very convicting post script: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable (unspeakable, inconceivably wonderful) gift." Certainly Paul meant the crowning gift of Jesus. Meanwhile, just for grins, I challenge you to ponder another thought with me. Could this verse mean that God gave us the indescribable gift of...giving???? Receiving a gift is so much fun. Who lets a wrapped present stay that way for very long? Nobody! Conversely, nothing is more fulfilling than giving while leaving the results to God.

In Acts 20:35, Doctor Luke quotes Paul who claims that Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." None of the four gospel writers recorded that quote. If Paul believed that Jesus said it, that's enough for me. In Matthew 10:8 Jesus said this: "...freely you have received, freely give." Jesus died to save so we could live to give.

Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland

### Bible Studies for Life with Becky Brown



## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Southside Church, Vicksburg:** Revival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Don

Savell, speaker.

► **Terry's Creek Church, Magnolia:** Revival, Mar. 30; services, 10:30 a.m., fol-

lowed by covered dish lunch and 12:30 p.m. mini-concert; Steve Jackson, McLaurin Heights Church, Pearl, speaker; Steve Jackson, Pearson Church, Pearl, music; LaVerne Summerlin, pastor. ► **Fair River Church, Lincoln Association:** Revival,

Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, speaker; Sun. a.m. music, Ronnie Cottingham; Sun. - Wed. p.m. music, Steve & Becky Carver & Family; Jay Anderson, pastor. ► **Trinity Church, Petal:** Re-

vival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m., followed by lunch and 12:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., light meal, 5:30 p.m. followed by services, 7 p.m.; Dean Stewart, speaker; David Kitrell, music.

# Ark reproduction on track for 2016 unveiling

**PETERSBURG, Ky. (BP)** — A successful bond offering allowing construction to begin in May on a full-scale replica of Noah's ark can be tied to publicity generated by a creationism debate with Bill Nye, known as The Science Guy, and by Paramount's film, Noah, Answers in Genesis CEO Ken Ham said.

Ham's defense of creationism against Nye's evolution arguments was viewed by seven million people in a Feb. 4 live stream, according to the biblical apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis (AiG).

Three weeks later, Ham announced enough money had been raised to fund the \$73 million first phase of the Ark Encounter educational park, which includes a 510-foot ark.

He credited God for bringing the project to fruition. "The date of my debate with Bill Nye had been on our calendar several months before we knew the final delivery date of the Ark bonds," Ham said in a press release, "but in God's timing, not ours — and although the bond registration had already closed before Feb. 4 and no more bonds could be purchased — the high-profile debate prompted some people who had registered for the bonds to make sure they followed through with submitting the necessary, and sometimes complicated, paperwork."

The raising of several million dollars in donations and ark memberships prior to the bond paid for the purchase and clearing of land, architectural plans, exhibit designs and other costs, AiG reported.

The first phase of the Ark Encounter will include installation of the park infrastructure on 800 acres off I-75 in Grant County, Ky., south of Cincinnati, and the construction of the ark. The ark is slated to open in 2016, Ham said.

Ham continues to caution people about watching Paramount's upcoming Noah. He described it as not



only biblically inaccurate, as Paramount has admitted, but outright "anti-biblical."

The Ark Encounter will help people understand the biblical account of Noah's ark, which is crucial to the Gospel, Ham said. "I believe the ark is the greatest reminder of the Gospel. As Noah and his family had to go through a door to be saved, we need to go through a door to be saved. So it's a reminder of Jesus. He said, 'I am the door.'"

## On the web

For more information on Comfort's production, Noah — and the Last Days, go to [NoahTheMovie.com](http://NoahTheMovie.com).

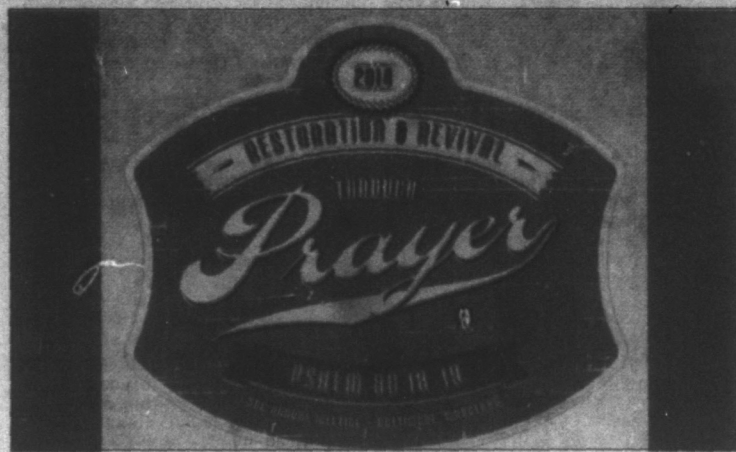
"We want to build the ark with that emphasis, to lead people to the door, to go through. Whereas the Noah movie is being produced by Hollywood for entertainment."

Ham encourages moviegoers to in-

stead see a biblically solid portrayal of the global flood in a movie directed by Ray Comfort, Noah — and the Last Days, available for Internet download ahead of its March 28 release on YouTube and DVD.

Comfort, founder, president and CEO of Living Waters Publications, said he directed and produced his Noah film in protest of Paramount's production. For more information on Comfort's production, go to [NoahTheMovie.com](http://NoahTheMovie.com).

# SBC 2014 annual meeting theme announced



"Then we will not turn away from You; revive us, and we will call on Your name. Restore us, Yahweh, the God of Hosts; look on us with favor, and we will be saved" (HCSB).

Psalm 80:18-19

**BALTIMORE (BP)** — "Restoration and revival through prayer," is the theme of the Southern Baptist Convention 2014 annual meeting June 10-11 in Baltimore, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter has announced.

"We have not had a theme that focused on prayer and revival for many years," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans. "I pray that God will send revival across America and particularly among Southern Baptists."

Psalm 80:18-19 is Luter's selection as the biblical text to support the theme: "Then we will not turn away from You; revive us, and we will call on Your name. Restore us, Yahweh, the God of Hosts; look on us with favor, and we will be saved" (HCSB).

Luter will preach during the June 10 evening session, marking his last presidential address.

No other business will be presented or discussed in the evening session, adhering to last year's annual meeting format, said David Smith, chairman of

the SBC Committee on Order of Business and executive director of Austin Association in Texas.

"It obviously had such a great response last year that we decided we wanted to do it again," Smith said of the evening session. "We just think it's going to bring back something that folks go to Convention for — to hear the Word, to be inspired, and to worship. We're looking forward to it."

Luter, a member of the committee, requested at the September 2013 Executive Committee meeting that the evening worship format continue, Smith said.

"[President Luter] said, 'I'd really like to recommend that we do the Tuesday night event again.' And of course our committee wholeheartedly supported that," Smith said. "On Tuesday night of the convention he'll be sharing his president's address and Roger [McGee, pastor of music and worship at First Church in Alexandria, Va.] will be leading in the worship time."